

get HCFA to change its rules mostly on account of HCFA knowing that if it changes a rule, for example, in Nebraska, it is going to be changing rules for all other 49 States as well and could add significant costs to the program. So HCFA ends up being very inflexible, I argue not through any fault of its own but through the fault of the way the law is written.

The second objective of this legislation is that we provide comprehensive choice in a new legal environment, where the citizens will have more opportunity to make their case to a public board and the public board will have much greater expertise in making decisions about how to create a competitive environment that will enable HCFA to compete as well as private sector companies to come on line and offer more choice at lower cost to beneficiaries.

The third thing is we say that a prescription benefit should and must be considered in a comprehensive solution with Medicare reform. We cannot separate it. You cannot take a prescription benefit for a Medicare beneficiary and separate it and create an entirely new program without considering the need for comprehensive change in the program. It is much more likely that we will satisfy concerns of taxpayers that we not end up with a program that has an open-ended cost to it and much more likely, especially with the structural change of the board, that the rules will be written so the marketplace cannot only develop affordable products, but develop creative products that we are apt to see increasingly being asked for by our health care delivery system.

I am very pleased to be a cosponsor of this legislation. I hope we are able to get a markup in the Senate Finance Committee next year. I hope this becomes the basis for bipartisan reform. All too often this is a subject matter that lends itself to demagoging on both sides. Medicare has become a verb and a form of political art. Hopefully, as a consequence of it beginning in a bipartisan fashion, it will end up in a bipartisan fashion, and the rhetoric will be much more tame and much more honest as well.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Mr. KERREY. Mr. President, I would also like to take a minute to talk about a companion program to Medicare, and that is Social Security.

A Social Security beneficiary will say Social Security and Medicare are in the same program, indeed, in the same act, in the same law. As far as the beneficiary is concerned, one program serves the needs of the other.

The General Accounting Office today released a public report which evaluates five plans that have been presented to the people, five plans that the people should look to and evaluate to answer the question: Is this a plan I support?

Let me list what those plans are. The first plan is the status quo, what I call in a nonpejorative fashion the do-nothing plan; the do-nothing plan calls for maintaining current law, waiting until manana, and fixing the program 10 years, 20 years from now. GAO evaluates the do-nothing plan, which, by the way, has 500 cosponsors at the moment in the House and the Senate. The GAO evaluated the plan that Senator GREGG, myself, Senator GRASSLEY, Senator BREAU, and three others in the Senate have introduced. The bill number is S. 1383. The House companion bill to S. 1383 is H.R. 1793, a companion bill which has nine cosponsors. The GAO evaluated that bill as well.

The GAO also evaluated S. 1831. That is the President's reform plan. It has been introduced in the Senate. The GAO also evaluated the Archer-Shaw proposal, though Chairman ARCHER and Representative SHAW have yet to introduce their reform plan in the form of a bill. They evaluated the details of the Archer-Shaw proposal that were provided to them. And finally, GAO evaluated Representative KASICH's proposal. I do not know what its number is or how many people are on it, but it is a specific piece of legislation that has been introduced.

The GAO has done a very useful service, in my view, for a couple of reasons.

Reason No. 1 is that GAO finally identifies the status quo as a plan. In other words, you cannot not be for something. If you are not on a bill, you are supporting the status quo, you are supporting existing law. There are serious consequences to supporting existing law.

The GAO evaluated all five of these plans.

Secondly, GAO outlined for the first time the eight financial and budgetary criteria by which these five proposals ought to be judged by the American public. In the report, they ask:

First, does it reduce pressure of Social Security spending on the budget?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator's time has expired.

Mr. KERREY. How much time did I have?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator had 5 minutes under a unanimous consent agreement to proceed.

Mr. KERREY. I ask unanimous consent that I be given 2 additional minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. KERREY. Mr. President, there were eight other questions on the financial side.

Question No. 2: Does it reduce the national debt?

Question No. 3: Does it reduce the cost of Social Security as a percent of GDP?

Question No. 4: Does it increase national savings?

Question 5: Does it solve the 75-year actuarial solvency problem? In other words, can it keep the promise to all

270 million beneficiaries both eligible today and out into the future?

Question No. 6: Does it create new, undisclosed contingent liabilities?

Question No. 7: Does it increase payroll taxes or place an obligation on general revenues?

And question No. 8: Are there safety valves to accommodate future growth in the program?

These are the key financial questions. The GAO has laid out an evaluation of the five dominant plans that have been offered by Members of Congress to the public.

In addition, GAO attempts to do an analysis of the administration and implementation issues in each plan.

Finally, GAO attempts to evaluate whether or not equity—generational equity—and progressivity have been taken into account in each plan. Equity and progressivity are always important. Social Security is a very progressive program to beneficiaries.

I hope that this GAO report gets a little bit of air time and a little bit of consideration by Members. I hope that particular attention will be paid to the do-nothing, status quo plan.

There are consequences to the do-nothing plan. The current status quo plan dramatically increases debt and interest costs in the future. This large debt will have a major impact on the tax burdens and interest rates of future workers. GAO comments very unfavorably when it measures the status quo approach against its eight financial criteria. There are very negative consequences for both current beneficiaries and future beneficiaries and the American taxpayers for doing nothing.

I urge my colleagues to take a closer look at this GAO report—and to really understand the cost tradeoffs between different approaches to Social Security reform. The battle cry all year long has been to save Social Security first. We created an elaborate lockbox mechanism so we could do it. My hope is that next year, with the assistance of GAO and this report, we will see an increasing number of Members who are enthusiastic about putting their names on specific legislation to reform Social Security.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

UNANIMOUS-CONSENT AGREEMENT—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, as in executive session, I ask unanimous consent that on Wednesday, following the vote in relation to the drug amendment to the bankruptcy bill, the Senate proceed to executive session for the consideration of calendar Nos. 399 to 400, the nomination of Carol Moseley-Braun to be ambassador to New Zealand and Samoa. I further ask unanimous consent that the Senate then immediately proceed to a vote on the confirmation of the nomination and, following the vote, the President then immediately be notified of the Senate's